

# Contemporary Transition Challenges

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023

REPORT



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## Acknowledgements

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Our thanks and gratitude also go to the participants who introduced each of our sessions and to everyone who took part in the consultation for stimulating and contributing to the high level of discussion that took place. A list of all participants is provided at the end of this report.

## Introduction

In October 2023, Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) partnered with St George's House (SGH) to deliver a consultation which considered contemporary transition challenges facing Service leavers and their families as they prepare for and move from the Armed Forces to civilian life.

Each year, around 15,000 individuals leave the UK Armed Forces. The vast majority of Service leavers and their families make a successful transition into civilian life, with their lives having been enormously enriched by their time in service. However, successful transitions are not necessarily easy, particularly when viewed via wider metrics that go beyond resettlement services, employment trajectories, and the personal planning of the Service leaver themselves. Understanding success in a more holistic and longer timescale, requires a focus on setting firm foundations for longer term stability and the successful transition of the whole family and dependants.

It is already known that for some ex-Service personnel and their families there is a need for additional support during the transition journey and evidence has shown that barriers to accessing appropriate support still remain for these Service leavers and their families. Furthermore, for a minority of Service leavers who have a difficult transition, there can be significant consequential costs, both to the individual and their family, as well as to wider society and the public purse.

During the last decade there has been significant progress made to better support Service leavers and their families to transition into civilian life. This has included the introduction of resettlement provision for early Service leavers, the creation of the Defence Transition Services as part of the MOD's new Holistic Transition Policy, and the introduction of the Veterans' Gateway and the Office for Veterans' Affairs. At the same time, there have also been significant changes within society, not least the impact of the Covid pandemic, and significant changes to types and mode of employment.

## Aim

Whilst recognising that many improvements have been made to support Service leavers and their families over the last 10 years, FiMT wanted to better understand the challenges that modern Service families face when transitioning out of the military to better inform policy development and service delivery for all ex-Service personnel and their families to enable them to live successful and fulfilling civilian lives.

Therefore, this consultation focused on three key questions:

1. Can the transition experience of Service leavers and their families be **further improved**?
2. Is transition being **approached in the right way** (conceptually and practically) for the 21st Century?
3. What should be the **priorities for change** looking forwards, and who are the **actors** for each area of change?

Due to the nature of the consultation and the wide range of views expressed, this report draws out the key themes, issues and areas of priorities rather than providing a set of specific answers or actions for organisations.

## Approach

Our discussions were framed around three phases of the transition journey identified from the 'Lifting Our Sights - The Transition Journey' ethnographic research<sup>1</sup>. This research generated a schematic transition journey which contains eight distinct stages to transition based on the real-life experiences of a cohort of research participants and stakeholder interviews. For the purposes of this consultation the different stages of the journey were grouped into three distinct phases, namely:

	<b>Journey stage</b>
<b>Moving towards transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'joining, serving and preparing'</li><li>• when an individual is still serving and preparing to leave the Armed Forces</li><li>• covers making the decision to leave, make and share plans, engagement with resettlement processes</li></ul>
<b>Confronting reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'threshold, confronting, integrating'</li><li>• actual process of leaving, possible need for relocation</li><li>• period of uncertainty, potential loss of personal identity</li><li>• may be a need to seek additional support to overcome the scale of change experienced</li></ul>
<b>The Veteran in Civilian Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• final stage of the journey – 'settling' and 'landing'</li><li>• stability, new sense of personal identity as a civilian who has previously served</li><li>• stable place to live, secure employment, sense of civilian self</li></ul>

## Report

This report provides a summary of the key themes and priorities for change which emerged from the consultation. As with all St George's House consultations, this report has been prepared under the Chatham House rule and aims to outline from an independent standpoint the main ideas and views put forward during the consultation, with the understanding that not everybody involved in the discussions may have endorsed all the proposals and viewpoints included.

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<sup>1</sup> [Lifting Our Sights Beyond 2030](#), Future Agenda, 2021

## Context for the discussions

Throughout this consultation it was acknowledged that, in general, Service personnel do leave the Armed Forces 'well'. However, there are a number of areas that were initially discussed and that provided context for the discussions that followed:

- **Future Civilian Employment:** whilst MOD statistics suggest that 87% of leavers who used the MOD's Career Transition Partnership (CTP) are in employment within six months, it is acknowledged that this is not representative of all Service leavers, with 40% not included in the data. This also provides an overview six months after service and may not reflect their long-term employment situation.
- **Communications:** whilst there have been a number of recent improvements to the support available during transition, this has led to an increase in information available, which can result in difficulties navigating the volume and complexity of support and information on offer. The consultation discussions highlighted a need to improve communications to ensure that Service leavers and their families are engaging with the transition process and support services.
- **Cost of living:** the rising cost of living was raised by a number of participants as an issue that may impact transition support. Third sector organisations have reported a significant increase in requests for support as a result of the cost of living crisis, with potential wider impacts on wellbeing and stress, recognised factors that are known to impact the success of transition.
- **In-Service Employment model:** potential changes to the employment model for the Armed Forces and its associated impact on the definition and scope of transition was raised as a strategic issue which needs consideration. The challenges of retention and incentivising military service, as well as challenges with recruitment as a result of evolving societal needs and expectations, were noted. These changes could impact the very concept of transition, with personnel rejoining in specialist roles or on a more flexible basis, and also impacting the nature of a full Service career.

## Discussion 1: Moving towards transition

Our first discussion considered the early stages of transition when individuals are still serving and sought to explore which aspects of the current process are working well and where issues remain.

Overall, it was agreed that the transition process has been significantly improved and that the majority of Service leavers do 'leave well' from the Armed Forces. The focus of future improvements and changes therefore needs to be on those who are still struggling and keeping pace with evolving needs.

Some of the key themes discussed included:

### **Need for a broader eco-system of support**

The discussions highlighted the importance of viewing resettlement within a wider context than employment, and not just for the Service leaver but also the family. This broader eco-system needs to evolve according to need. Whilst it was acknowledged that the Defence Transition Services provides support to the most vulnerable and those most likely to face challenges as they leave the Armed Forces, there remains a communication challenge to ensure that Service leavers and the chain of command are aware of the support available.

### **Holistic approach to transition**

It was acknowledged that there is now an increased willingness to address transition holistically and as a 'life stage', rather than just discrete elements of a resettlement process. This is reflected in the recognition of the importance of ensuring that serving personnel and their families develop life skills throughout their career in the Armed Forces, to ensure that they can appropriately prepare for, and deal with, the challenges they may face in civilian life.

Further work in this area is however required, as participants noted that some personnel still leave the Armed Forces without having properly prepared for civilian life, and without an understanding of how their broader personal skills and experience may translate into civilian life. For instance, for some Service leavers the transition from 'we' to 'I' when they are no longer in service, still remains a major cultural barrier; for others they struggle to understand and communicate their skills to civilian employers, or to appreciate the changing nature of a labour market with moves towards potentially more part time and flexible employment.

### **More transformative and less transactional transition**

It was felt that the transition process needs to be less transactional and more transformative in nature, supporting Service leavers with self-understanding and awareness of who they are as an individual and citizen 'underneath the uniform'. It was recognised that more support for this needs to be provided in-service, enabling individuals to gain a better understanding of living as a civilian and should be incorporated into the MOD's overarching Life Skills policy (currently being developed).

### **Greater flexibility and personal responsibility**

How to encourage greater flexibility and personal responsibility within the transition process was highlighted as a key theme. The current 'one-size-fits-all' approach to transition is seen as too inflexible and does not allow the individual to tailor the support required.

There is also a sense that Service leavers have an expectation that their transition is the responsibility of the Government or the Armed Forces, and it was thought that Service leavers need to feel more responsible for their own transition, to increase their engagement in the process and with the support provided.

### **Impact of push or pull to leave**

There was consideration of the impact of a Service leaver who have proactively chosen to leave and those who were 'forced' to leave service; for example, due to failing a drug test or medical discharge. Whilst

the policy to support early Service leavers (ESL) has improved, there is a need to consider the unique experience of each group.

Participants also raised concerns regarding the barriers to offering support to veterans, noting that a potential perception within some in the veteran community that early Service leavers were not 'true veterans' and therefore not worthy of receiving veteran-specific support.

### **Lack of engagement with resettlement activities**

Some of the poor preparation for transition is still seen as the result of a lack of engagement with resettlement activities. The perception that transition only starts when an individual decides to leave could prevent serving personnel engaging with transition processes early enough; many serving personnel feel it is not relevant to them until they decide to leave and view early preparation as irrelevant.

It was acknowledged that policies are in place to provide sufficient time for serving personnel to attend resettlement courses, however this does not always translate into practice. If Service leavers cannot engage appropriately with the support being provided, they may fail to prepare appropriately and consequently struggle with transition.

Other reasons for not engaging with the resettlement process include being deployed towards the end of an Armed Forces career, still not being given time off for resettlement activities, or a general lack of resources (i.e. time, effort and expense) required to engage with the process.

### **Clear measurement of transition success**

Having specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was considered important in terms of measuring how well transition was working for Service leavers and to identify any specific areas that needed improvement. However, there is no definition at present of what 'good' looks like in terms of transition, and this makes it difficult to measure progress or say quantifiably whether someone has undertaken the process successfully.

This is partly due to the lack of definition of transition itself but also of a need to recognise that successful transition is more than just employment. Other aspects, such as having access to housing, being geographically stable and able to adjust to civilian life are equally as significant, as well as ensuring that families have access to their own appropriate transition support.

### **Better collation of data and collaboration**

The discussions outlined the importance of data in relation to identification of Service leavers who may struggle with the transition process. Data could be better used to identify individuals (through a better understanding of in-service welfare needs) and to predict those who may face difficulties during transition and so offer additional support earlier in the process. This use of data would allow more to be done to predict vulnerable individuals who are more likely to struggle with transition and who could be provided with extra, targeted support.

However, this would require better collaboration and a continuum of support from various in-service and external welfare services. The perception from some was that the in-service welfare services did not always collaborate as well as they could and so vulnerable individuals can easily be lost or forgotten if they move into a new role or to a new location. These improvements would mean that personnel could have more continuing support rather than getting 'lost in the system.'

It was also felt important that when Service leavers reach out for in-service support, they are met with an appropriate response. For example, ensuring they are treated empathetically and provided the support they need, rather than judgemental responses or downplaying their problems, given the importance of a successful transition.



### **Clarity of support**

Alongside improvements to the support provided to Service leavers and measurement/use of data to track outcomes, participants also discussed communications and the complexity and variety of support which is available. The current situation was described with terms such as "cluttered", "overwhelming", and "confusing" for Service leavers, and discussion identified a need for a more coherent approach to communications that clearly explains to Service leavers what was available to them and where they can go to access support, if required.

### **Clearer communication**

Current communication methods are invariably aimed at and provided to the Service leaver themselves, resulting in families or partners finding it difficult to access and understand the support available; which often includes acronyms and technical language. Partners and families are also impacted by the transition process and are often the primary support network for veterans. It is therefore vital that they are also able to engage with the information provided.

It was felt that simplified and clearer communication would be beneficial as the current support space for Service leavers is overcrowded and often confusing, particularly for Service leavers who may have already reached crisis point. This can cause problems for their level of engagement and therefore impact the level of support they receive.

### **Management of expectations**

Concerns were raised around unrealistic expectations - the difference between support that is expected and support that is needed, and it was thought that Service leavers may feel they are 'entitled' to certain support during their transition process, and that this may not be available or they may not be eligible for certain support.

Many felt that the expectations of the transition process and expected outcomes for a return to civilian life may not be realistic in the current societal and economic environment. For example, there is a lot of emphasis put on the importance of home ownership, which is becoming increasingly difficult in wider society, and of some degree of 'insulation' from the effects of a cost of living crisis.

### **Areas for improvement**

A number of areas were identified as potential opportunities to further improve the in-service stage of transition, including:

- Encouraging earlier engagement with the resettlement process, at an earlier stage of a Service career.
- Offering greater flexibility and tailored support, including greater engagement with the civilian world earlier and throughout a Service career.
- Defining what is meant by transition and establishing a broader set of measures which define successful transition for Service leavers and families.
- Using data to track outcomes and support identification of personnel likely to struggle with transition, so more tailored support can be offered.
- Reviewing communications to encourage better engagement with resettlement and improve navigation of support available.

## Discussion 2: Confronting reality

The second discussion focused on the evolving and future challenges for Service leavers and their families as they actually leave the Armed Forces and return to life as a civilian.

It is important to recognise that whilst there is a period of shock and uncertainty for many Service leavers as they 'cross the wire' and return to civilian life, for many the process is a positive one.

Key issues raised included:

### **Potential for more negative transition experience for Service leavers of lower rank or early Service leavers**

There was a strong view that individuals who are more likely to struggle with this stage of the transition process come from positions of lower rank. The cause of this was less clear. However, this could be due to lack of transferable skills, limited engagement in resettlement processes, or the sudden nature of transition. There was agreement that more research is needed to understand what additional support could be provided for individuals at risk, so they may achieve a more positive transition.

### **Barriers to accessing civilian support services**

There was broad agreement that self-exclusion by veterans from mainstream support services is something which needs to be addressed. It was suggested by some participants working in veteran support that, whilst many mainstream services do try to engage with the veteran community, they fail to offer support because veterans are not willing to engage with the civilian services.

The cause of this unwillingness is thought to be that veterans consider mainstream services as unlikely to understand them, their background, or experiences. This may be due to the well-recognised, general military mindset of Service personnel and a desire for independence, and is not helped by the wider veteran community and media in general which reinforces the differences rather than commonalities between veterans and civilians.

It was concluded that the narrative should not juxtapose 'civilian versus veteran' but should instead be about the level and type of need of an individual. For example, a veteran who has a drug addiction issue will require the same support as a civilian with a drug addiction. It was posited that when veterans are really desperate they do not mind where the help comes from. Nonetheless, veterans should be provided with support before they reach this point and it could not be assumed that those in the most need will reach out when in desperate need.

A number of new(er) services including the Veterans' Gateway, and some specialist support programmes (for example, Op COURAGE, a veteran specific mental health system or the recently launched Op FORTITUDE, a Government-funded pathway for veterans at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness) were discussed as examples of responses to specific need, however these are not always offered on a UK-wide basis or sufficiently well resourced.

### **Limited tracking of Service leavers**

There is limited ongoing tracking of Service leavers apart from CTP's employment outcomes

There was also agreement that this needs to be improved, and that for some veterans it can take time for trauma and its impact to surface.

How to record veteran status remains an issue, although it is hoped that the current roll-out by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) of the provision of veterans' ID cards combined with the delivery of the OVA's Data and Research Framework, will help with this.

### **Impact of limited trust in the military**

There are also challenges that affect specific cohorts of Service leavers, for example veterans who have limited trust in the 'military' due to moral injury or many LGBT+ veterans discharged because of their

sexuality. Such cohorts face unique challenges and may not trust the military enough to use the veteran related services that are provided, but may also not want to use mainstream support. Therefore, veteran's specific needs and leaving circumstances need to be taken in to account.

It was raised that the veteran community can potentially appear unwelcoming, negative and, at worse 'toxic' for some Service leavers. Concerns were raised that the veteran community can appear to have a tendency to decide who is a 'real veteran' and who is not, which often means that early Service leavers, women, people of colour, and the LGBTQ+ community may not be accepted so easily by their peers, and so feel more isolated and have less access to a support network.

At the same time, the veteran community helps to preserve the sense of entitlement and does not encourage an individual to 'move on' and create a new civilian identity which as will be discussed in the next section is essential for an effective transition to civilian life.

### **Tailored approach to transition planning**

Veteran homelessness was used to provide some insight into the need for a more tailored approach to transition planning, especially for those at risk of a poor transition experience. As an example, there is an assumption that young Service leavers, particularly early Service leavers, will simply leave service and move back to their family home rather than consider different accommodation scenarios.

When working with young and often vulnerable individuals, there is a need to consider if the individual joined the Armed Forces to get away from challenges at home and are simply being forced back into a negative environment. It is therefore imperative that every Service leavers' home situation is taken into account during transition. At the same time however, some felt that there is a need to consider personal responsibility and that the home situation of a Service leaver was not the MOD's problem to fix.

### **Areas for improvement**

A number of areas were identified as potential opportunities to further improve the confronting stage when Service leavers and their families leave the Armed Forces, including:

- More acknowledgement of the cultural change experienced and adjustment required when leaving the Armed Forces and moving to civilian life.
- Ongoing tracking of Service leavers, beyond CTP employment outcomes.
- Addressing the barriers that prevent Service leavers from accessing mainstream services.
- Ensuring that transition planning and veteran support is tailored to individual needs and experiences.

### Discussion 3: The veteran and civilian society

The focus of the third discussion was longer-term and sought to understand “*What are the barriers which remain to leading a successful and fulfilled life after serving in the UK Armed Forces?*” In considering this question, our discussions explored what might prevent an individual from establishing a personal civilian identity and fully integrating into civilian society, and what changes are needed to support such a change.

Key issues raised included:

#### **Importance of health and associated wellbeing issues**

The most significant issue to achieving the goal of a successful and fulfilled life after service would appear to be health and associated wellbeing issues. However, participants noted that it is difficult to know whether this is a problem specific to veterans and previous military service, or something more general. The NHS and veteran specific services are both under significant stress at present, and so it is difficult to separate the two issues and determine where the issue lies.

Nonetheless, some veterans may need high levels of health support, especially orthopaedics and mental health services, and it was noted that there are variations in the level and type of support across the devolved nations. For example, Op COURAGE (a veteran specific mental health system) is available in England and has been adapted for Wales but is not in place in Scotland or Northern Ireland. Therefore, veterans in different nations who have the same needs, have differing types and levels of support available to them.

#### **Cultural barriers to integrating back into civilian culture**

On further examination of the barriers, the discussion identified deep-seated cultural and social differences which veterans can face when integrating back into civilian culture. Veterans are often proud of their service and feel a strong attachment to the military culture and environment. This means they can find it difficult to get more involved in civilian society, and often demonstrate a preference to talk to military rather than civilian friends. It was queried whether this was sensible and positive, or whether it would prolong their time spent in a ‘military bubble’ reinforcing a sense of lost identity and comradeship. Ultimately, successful integration into society is about an individual feeling *‘proud to have served but now a confident member of civilian society’*.

#### **Perceptions and unconscious biases about veterans**

It was discussed whether veterans may also find it hard to feel integrated in society due to pre-conceptions and unconscious biases that are held by civilians (including employers) about the Armed Forces. The word veteran has a range of connotations, ranging from ‘mad/bad/sad’ to ‘hero’, and this can make it difficult for veterans to integrate and create a new sense of identity after service. These connotations may often also be perpetuated by veterans themselves, charities and the media, making this a difficult narrative to influence. It was felt that sharing more positive stories of transition could help to alleviate some of the social pressure, but that influencing wider perceptions may be difficult to achieve.

#### **Avoiding a culture of dependency**

Participants also discussed that some Service charities may be part of the problem by creating a culture of dependency. Noting that many Service charities exist to help people who slip through the cracks of the support system, these organisations need ‘a demand’ for such support to continue to exist, and so they encourage individuals to seek help and in effect could be helping to generate a sense of entitlement and dependency. This was seen as a common paradox within the Service charity sector and, over recent years, one which has witnessed a growth in small, specific issue-focused charities, set up by individuals to support veterans. This limits more progressive growth and innovation in terms of the support offered, especially as the nature of transition and support required evolves. The degree of competing interests, a challenging economic environment and evolving needs suggest that greater collaboration between Service charities and a possible rationalisation of the sector is required. This would help to create a smaller number of well-funded organisations that are better able to support the changing needs of veterans.

### **Defined end point for MOD support**

The length of support which should be provided to veterans was also discussed. It was queried whether there should be a defined end-point for MOD support, as it seems unreasonable that MOD should be 'all things for all people' and offer unlimited support. There also appears to be an unrealistic expectation from veterans that they will be provided with any support for 'as long as needed'.

This was not to suggest that veterans with longer-term support needs should not be offered dedicated and appropriately funded support for as long as needed, but rather that for those veterans who have integrated successfully back into civilian life the level of support available should be time limited. It was recognised that this will require careful policy development but may address the ongoing dependency issues discussed earlier.

### **Areas for improvement**

A number of areas were identified as potential opportunities to further improve the final stage of the transition journey, including:

- Supporting Service leavers to integrate successfully into civilian life by removing cultural barriers and correcting unhelpful narratives of veterans through the sharing of positive stories.
- Improving collaboration between military charities.
- Removing the culture of dependency by setting an end point for MOD to help prevent unhealthy expectations of support.

## Future priorities

Having considered the transition process across the three main phases of the journey, the consultation identified areas for change and future priorities for development. Participants were asked to indicate which topics they felt should be highest priority and a ranked list was developed as shown in the table below.

Priority	Topic Area
1.	Encourage personal responsibility of Service leavers and explore how to empower them to take on that responsibility
2.	Improved communication of support services (for Service leavers and families)
3.	Understanding/resetting Service leavers' expectations of transition support
4.	Better data and tracking of veteran status (e.g. whether they are homeless)
5.	Better early identification of vulnerable leavers
6.	Creating a more flexible transition (including timing, approach/focus, alignment with evolving military career structures)
7.	Addressing reluctance to engage in mainstream services
8.	Tailoring transition to better accommodate personal circumstances such as voluntary vs involuntary discharge
9.	Developing a commonly accepted definition of transition and specific KPIs to measure success
10.	Improved in-service line management of transition and improved support in service

## Key priorities

Three areas of these priorities were chosen to be considered in more detail: encouraging personal responsibility and managing expectations, use of data to enhance the transition process and improving communications. Three questions were posed for each topic:

- Define the issue which needs to be addressed?
- What needs to change and why?
- What actions and by whom are required to deliver positive change?

A summary of the key points discussed on each priority is provided below.

### 1. Personal responsibility and expectations

Veterans have high expectations of the support that is provided to them and for how long this support will be provided. An overall conclusion was that such a high expectation of support reflects a general, unrealistic trend in society that greater support should be provided from Government/public services regardless of how this is to be funded.

Having such a high level of expectation can lead to some veterans not taking enough personal responsibility for their transition process, and this can be exacerbated by a culture of over dependence

upon single Service support through an individual's service career or a naïve disengagement from real world issues such as living costs, managing finances, etc.

Life skills were considered a key aspect of personal responsibility and the more developed an individual's life skills are, the more likely they are to take greater personal responsibility in preparing for a successful transition. It is therefore vital that Service leavers are encouraged and empowered to assume greater personal responsibility for their careers and career options through the teaching of life skills, highlighting that transition starts from day one of joining the Armed Forces.

There also needs to be a better understanding of why some Service leavers do not engage with support systems and why some personnel are not able to undertake resettlement activities. To this end, there are three key questions for MOD to consider:

- Do Service leavers know what to do? (ie is there a culture of sustained communication that embeds being personally responsible for leaving?)
- Can Service leavers do what they need to do? (ie have we given them the skills and created the employment conditions for them to take responsibility?)
- Will Service leavers do what they need to do? (ie are there some Service Leavers that will not want to be personally responsible, e.g. those who are medically discharged?)

### Key actions:

- **Improve Service leavers' empowerment around life skills and personal responsibility:** by changing the narrative surrounding the transition process and highlighting that, through developing their life skills and the opportunities to exercise personal agency for their future, they will be able to better prepare for transition. Such a change would encourage Service personnel to engage with opportunities to develop skills and opportunities throughout their Service career, and realise the benefits of doing so.
- **Encourage further engagement:** this could be encouraged through the chain of command or through role models. Increasing engagement could also be provided throughout an individual's career by stronger career management discussions and incentivising personal responsibility. It was felt that career management and transition were inherently linked.
- **Identify most vulnerable cohorts:** understanding those cohorts who find the transition process difficult and why this is the case would enable specific systems to be put in place to support such Service leavers and prevent them from struggling in the first place. This will require further research and possibly data-mining.
- **Manage expectations:** it is important that Service leavers' expectations do not extend beyond what is actually offered. In order to do this, a better definition of the offer should be provided to manage expectations of the transition process and support provided.

## 2. Data and tracking

The role and importance of collecting and analysing data on the transition process was discussed in terms of the ability to measure impact of transition and to assess/evaluate any future changes or improvements. Developing a coherent and cohesive database and research framework on transition would also enable policy makers in terms of future development and refinement of policy.

A key challenge is that information is currently held across the government and charity sector and is quite dispersed. Creating a more cohesive database needs further work and resources to ensure access.

### Key actions:

- **Better understand the data requirement for transition:** it was felt that there is a need to understand and define the data requirement in terms of better supporting the transition process. There is a need to decide which outcomes should be sought and how can these be measured, as these are currently poorly defined. Data should also be used to improve the targeted provision of services and achieve better outcomes for individuals going through the transition process.
- **Need for macro and individual data:** data also needs to be understood at a macro and an individual level, including understanding the demand signal for certain types of support and what are the proxy data sets. It will also be important to understand data priorities and how to collect this data. This may involve understanding any specific protocols or technologies needed to gather data.

### 3. Communications

A general conclusion was that communications surrounding the transition journey are often not simple or easy to understand. This is particularly true for the families of Service leavers as communications are written for and delivered to military personnel, and use language that some may not be familiar with. It is important that communications engage with all target groups and recognise that family members play an important role in the transition process.

The importance of representation and inclusivity was also discussed. Currently, it was felt that the communications were too 'one-size-fits-all', whereas if they were more inclusive of a wider variety of personnel, there may be more engagement with messaging. Minority groups are often left out of communications and so more work needs to be done to ensure that communications are more inclusive ie they may not engage if they are not represented, as they may not feel the communications are relevant to their specific needs.

### Key actions:

- **Targeted communications:** communications should be more segmented and created for different stages of the transition process and for different groups/audiences. For example, having communications that are specifically for those in the early stages of transition, those who have been veterans for some time, and families. This would help to make it relevant and digestible for people who have different needs and experiences.
- **Clarity of the support system:** the entire transition support system needs to be made clearer and easier to engage with. During this discussion, we heard about a new CTP App which is currently in development, with the aim of managing a wide variety of information in one place and providing easier access for Service leavers. It was recognised that access for families would need to be considered.
- **Inclusive and representative communications:** there is a need to make communications more inclusive and representative. This is a key point to ensure that all Service leavers are engaged with their support systems and will reduce the number of them who fall through the cracks. One approach would be to test communications and new initiatives with a range of cohorts, particularly hard to reach ones, during the development stage.



## Participants

Michelle Alston	Chief Executive Forces in Mind Trust
Simon Bowyer	Principal Psychologist QinetiQ
Lee Buss-Blair	Group Director of Operations – Care & Support The Riverside Group
Sarah Clewes	Chief Executive Officer Naval Families Federation
Chris Coles	Head, Diversity and Inclusion British Army
Caroline Cooke	Head of Policy Forces in Mind Trust
Elly Cox	Associate Human Factors Consultant QinetiQ
James Greenrod	Deputy Director – Armed Forces People Support Ministry of Defence
Ann Griffiths	Head of Policy & Research Royal British Legion
Alistair Halliday	Chief Executive Forces Employment Charity
Bryony Hamilton	Joint Head of the Armed Forces Covenant Team Ministry of Defence
Maria Lyle	Director RAF Families Federation
Jim Macleod	Chair Forces in Mind Trust
Neil Marshall	CEO Forces Pension Society
Tom McBarnet	Director of Programmes Forces in Mind Trust
Kate McCullough	Assistant Head Veterans UK Ministry of Defence
Julie McIlroy	Head of Office and Strategic Lead Office of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner

Eldon Millar	Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (People Capability) & Defence Services Secretary Ministry of Defence
Daren Moss	Head Through Life Development Ministry of Defence People
Alan Murphy	Head Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office
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